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wall on their right side (as must be done for all lamaist holy places or objects) turning the prayer wheels as they come up to them.

The chief holy place is a large bare room, occupying almost the whole of the ground floor of the building. The interior of the room is empty except for four supporting pillars in the middle of the floor, and two slightly raised seats running in parallel lines from the altar to the door on which the lamas sit during ceremonies. In the centre of the back wall is the altar, inset in a carved wooden frame; on it are three large images, Sangyi Youbami in the centre, flanked by Gamyang Kanché Rimbuché and Chérézi; in front of these larger images are four smaller gods. On either side of the altar are worked wooden pigeon-holes, in which are kept the hundred and eight volumes of the Kangyour, one of the two Tibetan scriptures. These volumes consist of loose leaves bound up in a cloth and fastened between two plain pieces of wood as bindings. Scattered about the room are the various musical instruments which are not in use—drums, gongs and cymbals; the metal instruments similar to trumpets and clarionets, the conch shells and the flutes made out of a human femur are kept either on or before the altar. Every morning at dawn a *kané* (sacristan) places on the altar before the images seven bowls of water for the gods to drink and wash in; every evening at sunset these bowls are emptied and replaced by *chimi*—altar lights, consisting of a small metal container with a wick of bamboo or cloth, filled with melted butter or oil. There also stands on the altar a copper jug containing blessed water (*tyü*) and usually a pair of vases filled with flowers. There are also occasional offerings of cones of ground grain. During important festivals the front of the altar is completely hidden by elaborate constructions, chiefly made out of dough and butter which represent those gods who are being specially worshipped. Anybody approaching this or any other lamaist altar for the first time is meant to prostrate himself three times, standing with joined hands, falling to the knees and then touching the ground with the forehead. After these prostrations no special attention is paid to the altar, and it is quite permissible to turn one's back on it.

To the west of the main room, with a separate entrance also on the north wall, is the *lha-gong*. This is a high and narrow chamber almost entirely filled with four huge prayer wheels, reaching up to the ceiling; indeed the first and biggest of the wheels, which is called Betsa Guru, pierces the ceiling and its top, a cone

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346 778 surmounted with drapery of many colours, stands in the middle of the floor of the storey above. The four prayer-wheels practically touch each other; there is about a yard of free ground between the wheels and the side walls, and a larger space between the doorway and the first wheel. The *lha-gong* is primarily the place of worship of the nuns—*in-é-bu*—and they are meant to be responsible for the services and good order of this place. The big wheels are turned by people sitting down, and there are wooden handles attached to the base which make this operation easier. Each time one of the big wheels completes a revolution a small bell is rung. The wheels are covered with paper of a vaguely Chinese design, representing fantastic flowers and goddesses.

The first storey is approached by an external wooden staircase on the east side. It leads first of all into a corridor with an unused [783 cooking place; at the back of that is a small and completely dark 785] chamber called *tyang-gong* which is employed for mystic fasting and contemplation and also for the weekly ceremony of *kong-so klon* which is performed, at considerable risks, it is believed, to the officiant, to cleanse the monastery and neighbourhood of those devils which are infesting it.

The main first-storey room is very similar to the one below, except that the books and images on the altar are different. This first-floor altar is flanked by a pair of thunder-birds—*sa-dher*—resembling Chinese dragons in silhouette cut out of cardboard. A [779] couple of books are also kept permanently on the altar. To the right of the altar is a cupboard containing the sacred book Rin-chet; this book is treated with great reverence and the cupboard which holds it receives bowls of water and *chimi* as though it were an altar. But none of the lamas of Lingthem can read this book, nor do they know the proper ceremonials which should accompany the reading. On the four supporting columns hang wooden masks such as are worn when 'devil dances' are performed; but these actual masks, though representing named supernaturals, are not made for wearing, nor are dances performed in the monastery. Suspended from the cross-beams—for there is no ceiling and the reed thatch can be seen between the beams—are a number of sacred scroll pictures (*tang-ku*) but they have suffered so much from the weather that they are practically indecipherable.

[346] 289 To the west of the main room, above the *lha-gong* is a lumber room containing paper-presses and other paraphernalia not in constant use. The Lepchas make paper out of the pounded underbark

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173 century; about a generation later the Lepchas started living in permanent houses and were able to hold or increase their stock of domestic animals. Private property in land must have developed somewhat later; according to native tradition the land below the monastery—that is to say the more protected valley ground—has been divided into private property from time immemorial, but the higher ground was common property and was acquired and cleared as was wanted. At the time of Kahlyeu's father—that is to say about 1840—this ground too was divided up, and today all cultivatable ground is privately owned. Kahlyeu also said that until about 120 years ago only millet was cultivated, and not dry rice; but this seems to me improbable in view of the fact that the religious observances[8] are much more concerned with dry rice, than with millet or any other crop.

342 777 When new houses are made they are always built in the late autumn months, after the gathering of the harvest. This date is dictated by two reasons; at no other period would people have sufficient leisure and other dates would be ill-omened. The intending builder gathers materials for some months beforehand. The site of a new house is decided by a number of metaphysical considerations.

• [179] First of all there is a lamaist book called Sachet Zai Putta which contains general rules of a very minute nature, indicating what sites are lucky, and what unlucky. This book is said to have been composed by four Gods who gathered together at Gyakar (perhaps Benares) to compile rules so that people should know which sites are good and which bad, which fruitful and which barren, where children can be born, and where they cannot. The following is a small selection of these very detailed regulations:

'A good site is, if there is a mountain to the south and below a slope. It is good if there is a stream on either side of the slope and trees in front. It is good if there is an outcrop of rock to the east and a flat plain to the west and a water fall opposite. Roads from east and north are good, but those from south and west should be avoided as they are used by Deut *moong* (fever devil). If there is a tree to the north directly below the house it should never be cut down; if, however, there is one to the south directly above it, it should be cut, or, if it be too big to cut down, a knife or some other piece of iron should be stuck into it. If the earth on which the

[8] See Chapter Nine. It is probable that millet was historically the earlier crop: what I question is the date of the introduction of dry rice.

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771 religion is nameless but, on the analogy of lamaism, I propose calling
it the Mun religion (after the title of the priests); the worship of
756 the people of Mayel, which was possibly originally separate,
forms nowadays a part of the Mun religion; and this religion
is in all its major beliefs opposed to lamaism. For the Mun priest-
hood goes by the possession of a manifestation of a supernatural
spirit which is attached to a family line, so that there can never
be more than one simultaneously in each group (there may be two
in one biological family, one spirit descending from the father's
group, and one from the mother's). The chief function of the
Mun is to ward off the misfortunes and illnesses caused by devils,
which is done, partly by sacrifices, especially animal sacrifices, and
partly by direct communing with the supernaturals. On certain
occasions the Mun become possessed by their guardian spirit and
prophesy; at death ceremonies they summon the soul of the dead
man to speak his last wishes through their mouth, and then conduct
it into the *rum lyang*—the place of the Gods—where it is reborn as
an infant, and grows up to an eternal life similar to the life here on
earth.

771 In lamaism on the contrary priesthood and sanctity are acquired
by learning and not by inspiration; the sacrifice of animals is a
● 779 heinous sin; the future can be learned by calculations from the
holy books and not by inspiration; the soul of the dead wanders
for a short time in a sort of purgatory, before being reincarnated
either in another form on this earth, or going to some heaven or
hell, as different as imagination can make them from anything
experienced on earth. Most important of all, lamaist ethics are
founded on a belief in individual destiny and a sense of sin; lamaism
contains a long, explicit and detailed list of sins which can be
performed by human beings, and which are visited on the evil-doer,
first by feelings of remorse and secondly by punishment either in
this life or in future reincarnations. Lepchas have a word for sin,
because they have borrowed the Tibetan word, but they have, I
think, no idea of sin; and the only act to which the word is com-
monly applied is to the killing of animals; by a few who have
accepted lamaism it is also applied to envy or slander, expressed in
thought, word or deed. With these exceptions they do not use the
word 'sin,' *la-yo*, in connection with individual behaviour; the
supernatural sanctions which punish disapproved-of actions are
expressed as *nam-toak*, a year of disaster which affects the whole
community. Even for acts less violently disapproved of, which

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incur supernatural dangers, it is not the wrong-doer alone who is involved, but the whole of his family group; punishment is seen if members of a person's family die or suffer, even though the evil-doer survives himself. Indeed according to Lepcha ethics it could be said that anti-social acts are graded according to the number of people they may affect; only for acts of minor importance is there personal and individual punishment which falls on the evil-doer.

On some subjects there is agreement between the two religions, notably on the ambivalent nature of supernatural beings; in both religions the supernaturals are divided into three categories, mostly benevolent, neutral, and mostly malevolent. The supernaturals which are mostly benevolent are called gods, *rum*, those mostly malevolent devils, *moong*; but both agree that if the gods are displeased they take on a terrifying and threatening aspect, and that the best way to deal with devils is to flatter them temporarily by treating them as gods; and whether gods or devils are prayed to the ceremony always ends by begging them vehemently to *go away*. Whatever their chief aspects the supernaturals are potentially dangerous. The ambivalent supernaturals, such as *Thyak-dum*, or Hlamen Djémé (a lamaist supernatural equated with the Mun spirit), are called either *moong* or *rum* according to the personal dealings of the speaker with them at that moment.

Lamas and Mun are also agreed on the meaningful and prophetic character of dreams. The dreams of everybody are significant for those who have the knowledge to interpret them; the significance lies, not in the actions of the dream (as a rule), but in the seeing of certain objects which have a symbolical meaning. The causation of dreams is however different for the two religions, as is to some extent their interpretation; for the Mun dreams are sent by supernaturals, for the lamas they are the experiences of the soul released from the body by sleep; unbound by space or time the soul has experiences with the souls of other people, supernaturals and objects, and, on its return, informs the body it inhabits. For the Mun the soul is a very vague concept, practically only having an independent existence after the death of the body; the lamas however know all about souls.

The content of dreams can be divided into two classes; those that foretell some future 'natural' event, and those that foretell the presence of some, usually dangerous, supernatural. For the latter some apotropaic ceremony is usually available and in some cases essential; according to the supernatural indicated the ceremony will be performed by a lama or Mun.

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essential; according to the supernatural indicated the ceremony will be performed by a lama or Mun.

The following objects seen in dreams are lucky: gathering sand, collecting wood, seeing a woman with a big goitre: they foretell a good harvest; to put on new clothes or gather firewood or to have stones thrown at you mean the acquisition of property. Solid excreta indicate a good buckwheat harvest, liquid ones that the harvest will be destroyed by storms. To be covered with filth indicates coming wealth. To dream of climbing or going up hill is propitious. If you dream you are cut or are given silver it means that you will the next day be given a present of *chi*. The following objects are unlucky: a sick person lying down indicates a bad harvest: a tooth coming out means a relation will die, if from the right side of the mouth a paternal relation, if from the left a maternal; hair coming out or even combing hair also foretells death. A neighbour pounding rice foretells a death in his house. To dream of drinking foretells rain. A lake, swimming, or falling into water all foretell illness. A river foretells a message from the State authorities, agreeable if the water is clear, disagreeable if muddy. To dream that you are excreting in public means that your relations are slandering you. Being naked in a crowd foretells illness, as do dirty or ugly people. The setting sun foretells the death of kings. To dream of the dead foretells illness, to dream of a landslide, death, and also to dream of picking fungus. A dream of a red cloth or red flower means you will cut yourself, to dream of chicken's droppings means that some one is going to poison you. The list could be continued almost indefinitely.

Specially ominous dreams are: to dream of a kite or of men flying (this indicates the presence of Shook-sor *moong* and demands a ceremony by a Mun): to dream of fire (this indicates illness and also demands a ceremony by a Mun): to dream of a storm blowing into your house and lifting off the roof (this indicates that you are the object of malicious sorcery and lamas must perform ceremonies): to dream of going down hill carrying a load (this foretells illness; lamas and Mun can both avert it): to dream of a snake (this foretells danger and needs elaborate lamaist ceremonies); and so on. These specially ominous dreams are fortunately rare, for it would be considered dangerously rash to neglect the proper ceremonies. For less strongly ill-omened dreams it is permissible to make a hole in a leaf of a special species of wild arum and spit through it; this will avert the danger.

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Kurma foretold my headache with the following dream: he saw me walking along the riverbank with his mother-in-law, came to salute me, and I gave him a silver rupee. Later in the day I asked him to repeat the dream which he did as follows:—'The Sahib[2] dressed in his usual clothes went to the valley with my mother-in-law. I was coming from the forest along the river and I saluted the Sahib with joined hands[3] whereupon he presented me with a silver rupee. I then said to my mother-in-law "The sahib has come to see us: what can we set before him as a present?" My mother-in-law replied "The sahib has come to walk and to fish in the river; we have nothing suitable for him—no chickens, no eggs. What can we give?" After that I woke up.'

The interpretation of the dream was fulfilled; to dream that you are given silver means that you will get a good drink of *chi*, and this was fulfilled when Kurma called on the Mandal earlier in the day to discuss village affairs with him. The mother-in-law in my company showed that I was the victim of a female devil Langteun *a-nyou* who brings head-ache and eye-ache and thirst. Any ugly or dirty or badly-dressed woman represents this devil; the fact that it was his mother-in-law was without significance.(!) Had the head-ache persisted I should have hired a Mun to drive the devil away with offerings of *chi* and incense.

The demonology and, to a lesser extent, the hagiology of lamaism and the Mun religion are unified by a system of cross-identification in the two mythologies. Devils, and to a lesser extent gods, in one mythology are equated with differently-named supernaturals with similar attributes in the other. It thus happens that supernaturals have nearly all two names at least; but for Lepchas, as has been said, names are impermanent and without significance and no discomfort is felt from this. Some extraordinary tangles result from these identifications: the most popular lamaist god, called alterna-

I put these remarks down to courtesy. In fact, however, I was taken ill within a week of leaving Lingthem and had to go into hospital almost immediately on returning home. I did not recollect Tafoor's repeated prophecies till some months later, when going over my notes.

[2] The polite Lepcha term for a European is *Sé-pano*, which I believe to be a corruption of Sahib. *Pano* means a king, but the first syllable is apparently meaningless. The less polite word is *mik-dum*—white eyes. Europeans or fair people in dreams are good-omened, dirty people ill-omened.

[3] The two hands cupped together and held in front of the breast is a respectful attitude and gifts must always be received with joined hands, to indicate that the gift, whatever its nature, is overpoweringly large.

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tively Sakya Muni, Guru Rimpuché (beloved teacher), or Tashey-*thing* has been equated with Tak-bo-*thing*, in Mun theology the first man and the first hero, the grandson of Itpomu, the Creative Mother, and the two change places in mythology, according to the preference of the speaker, even in stories quite unsuitable to lamaist ethics (for example in the stories of the origin of eating fish and pork, where the hero kills the original fish- or pig-devil). And the confusion does not end there; after Tak-bo-*thing* and Tashey-*thing* have been telescoped into one person they are again separated into two with two simultaneous births in different places: the Mun hero is said to have been born underground at the same moment as the lamaist saint was born in heaven.

These confusions however are more obvious to the analytical European than to the practising Lepcha. With the exception of the crucial point of killing animals the Lepchas do not appear to be conscious of the implied contradictions; and the lamas through their education in the scriptures and through the casting of horoscopes have already such a training in sophistry that they almost automatically reconcile any implicit contraditions. In by far the greater number of ceremonies for private individuals Mun and lamas perform simultaneously contradictory rites for identical ends, with the Mun usually in the 'kitchen' and the lamas in the 'parlour.' Inside the monastery precincts Mun are never allowed to practise; but in a number of the calendrical festivals on 'neutral' ground the two perform side by side. Only for one private ceremony are the Mun entirely excluded; they can take no part at all in the funeral ceremonies of a lama. On the other hand the Mun have the speciality of most of the ceremonies connected with crops and hunting and some apotropaic rites.

Theoretically there is no quarrel between the two religions, but there is a certain veiled rivalry between their priests. The lamas accuse the Mun of using their supernatural powers for unworthy private ends, for instance killing magically the spouses of people they desire so as to be able to enjoy them without interruption, and the Mun accuse the lamas of being more sensual than the average man, more dependent on constant sexual intercourse and drink; abstention is possible for the layman, intolerable for the lama. As far as drink is concerned I think the charge is justified; the amount of *chi* consumed by lamas is incalculable. As soon as they settle down for a ceremony a *patyoot* is placed beside them, and constantly refilled and renewed; the chanting—and lamaist

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ceremonies may last anything from six hours to as many days—is thirsty work; and in the latter half of the services the officiants are seldom quite sober. These charges are never made openly or by one priest to another; in public they are quite amicable, though they usually affect to ignore the other's presence and performance.

The mythological justification for this amity between the two religions is that the patron spirits are husband and wife: the lamaist Tashey-*thing* is the husband, and the Mun (always a female spirit) the wife. For this reason, it is said, the lamas are stronger, and especially have more influence with the gods; the Mun on the other hand are perhaps more competent to deal with devils.

This attitude towards husband and wife, in which the husband is considered automatically the more powerful, is in itself probably a Tibetan import. For the Mun spirit has also another husband in the Padem (or Bum-*thing*); this latter resembles the Mun save that only men are possessed by it; a Padem is far less powerful than a Mun, and for many men this possession is the first step towards becoming a Mun. In the case of this supernatural husband and wife it is explained that the Mun is the more powerful because she is the wife; and this is far more congruent with the specific Mun mythology in which the female supernaturals are almost always the most important.

It would require far more knowledge than is at present available to be able to state definitely of the Lepcha folk-lore what elements are indigenous, what borrowed from Tibet, and what from other neighbouring tribes. My impression is that by far the greater number of stories told in Zongu, though many have foreign accretions, are of domestic origin. I only heard specifically Tibetan-lamaist stories from pious lamas, and by no means always from them.

ii

It is said that lamaism was introduced into Sikkim in or near 1641, the date of accession of the first lamaist king Penchoo Namgyé. He is said to have been made king by three lamas of the Nyingma-pa or 'Red Hat' sect, the unreformed branch of lamaism; these three lamas were fugitives from Tibet, following the violent struggles between the Yellow Hats and Red Hats and possibly Chinese or Mongolian intervention.

I have not been able to find any conclusive evidence as to the date of the conversion of the Lepchas to lamaism, or of their admission

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into the lamaseries. The fact that in the beginning of the eighteenth century King Chador invented an alphabet for them so that they could read the scriptures suggests that by that date the majority were already converted; but for a long time—and even today in some of the monasteries of Sikkim—Lepchas and other foreigners are not accepted for training as lamas, this privilege being exclusive to pure-born and healthy Tibetans and Sikkimese (Bhotiyas). But in lamaism the layman has practically no rôle at all; he cannot pray to, address or influence the supernaturals save through the intermediary of a lama; and therefore conversion to lamaism without admission to instruction could mean little more than a sort of voluntary tax. The first monastery in Sikkim, that of Sanga Chelling, was founded in 1697, the Talung monastery in 1789, Lingthem monastery in 1855, and Gyatong in 1860.[4] The Lepcha monasteries are said to be under the jurisdiction of Pemiongchi monastery—the largest in Sikkim—which belongs to the Lhatsun-pa sub-sect of the Nyingma-pa.

Like all other religions lamaism is a compound of a number of heterogeneous elements. The chief component is Mahayana Buddhism, or 'the greater vehicle' (itself an elaboration of Hinayana or primitive Buddhism—'the lesser vehicle'), to which has accreted a good deal of tantric Hinduism, some Chinese and Mongolian elements, and possibly the original Tibetan Bön-po religion.[5] Like other religions too, lamaism presents three aspects: a justifying mythology and scriptures, an ethic, and a social organisation.

The foundation and justification of lamaism is contained in the scriptures, above all in the two enormous collections of holy writings, the Kangyour or commandments (the Bible) and the Tangyour or commentaries (the Talmud). In these, together with other minor works, are to be found all knowledge and all necessary instruction for the conduct of life. The books have by themselves a talismanic virtue, and the reading of them is the essential preliminary to acquiring merit. These books apparently contain a

[4] I have taken these dates, and one or two other general statements from *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, vol. 1 (Calcutta 1894), particularly from the section *Lamaism in Sikkim* (pp. 241–391) by L. A. Waddell. Here, as in his book *The Buddhism of Tibet* (2nd. edition Heffer's, 1934), Dr. Waddell is exclusively concerned with the Tibetans and Sikkimese, and only mentions the Lepchas incidentally.

[5] Some modern critics suggest that this Bön-po religion may be the remnants of an historically earlier and unrecorded conversion of Tibet to Buddhism.

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779 very great variety of matter. Hinayana Buddhism was an atheist religion, and lamaism, though it deals with and reveres countless hosts of supernaturals, is in a way also atheist; it contains no major God or father-figure, and also no mother-surrogate. In many ways, as the early missionaries especially noted, lamaism in its organisation and ritual corresponds very closely with Roman Catholicism; but in their hagiology there is no equivalent to God the Father, or to the Virgin Mary; their gods, with their countless incarnations, correspond rather to the saints. Sakya Muni, Guru Rimpuché, is an object of special love and reverence, and might be likened emotionally to Jesus Christ. In the iconography and legends Guru Rimpuché is almost always a young man, an 'elder brother', rather than a 'father'. The demonology is as elaborate as the hagiology, but here also there is no principal figure.

The lamaist ethic is founded on the belief of the immortality of the soul, the principle of reincarnation, and on an automatic justice which rewards individual virtue and punishes individual sin in this and future incarnations; and, as a derivative, that an individual's condition in this life is the result of his actions in previous incarnations. This determinism is modified by behaviour during each life; and the object of the lamaist is by the active practice of virtue and the negative abstention from sin so to improve the soul that it can eventually escape from 'the wheel of cause and effect' and enter into the bliss of Nirvana or non-existence. The long list of sins of which a person is capable derive from three main causes—lust, ill-will and stupidity; virtue is acquired partly from abstention from acts deriving from such sources, partly by practising their opposites (love instead of hate, freeing captive animals instead of slaying them), and chiefly by the practice of religious ritual, including mystic contemplation. These last methods of acquiring perfection are only open to lamas; all that it is possible for laymen to do is to abstain from sin and support the lamas, in the hope that they will be rewarded by being themselves lamas in their next incarnations. Lamas and laymen alike can gain merit by repeating, or causing to be repeated, various prayers or *mantra*; the most famous of these is the six-syllabled *Om! mani pudme hum!* which is believed to be of great efficacy. It is not necessary to say these prayers with the lips; if they are inscribed on anything and this inscribed prayer is moved it is the equivalent to the actual uttering of the prayer. There are a number of devices for this automatic praying, the chief of which is the prayer wheel; prayer-wheels

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are made in every size, from the smallest to be held and turned in the hand, to enormous ones several times bigger than a man, all stuffed with repetitions of the *mantra*; every turn of these wheels is an acquisition of merit and a remission of sin. It is not even necessary that the pray-er should go to the effort of turning these wheels; wheels driven by mechanical power are just as efficient. Tafoor has four water-turned prayer-wheels set over a small stream by his house. The next most conspicuous method of automatic praying is the prayer-flag; this consists of a piece of cloth stamped with various *mantra* and attached to a pole; each time the wind makes the cloth flutter it is as if the prayer were uttered. There are a variety of these flags, some being for the benefit of the dead and others for that of the living. Finally the inscription of a *mantra* on stone (either in Tibetan or preferably Lenza characters) and set into a monument or building, acts as though this inscribed prayer was being said continuously.

The metaphysical beliefs of the lamas concerning the soul are various and self-contradictory. The soul of man can die, but the soul is immortal. The soul can be devoured by demons or destroyed by sorcery and will nevertheless be reincarnated. With the exception of the earth itself and certain mountains, which are the homes of supernaturals, everything possesses a soul; but the souls of rocks and plants are very weak and only survive as long as their owner survives. With plants every seed, as soon as it is formed, possesses a potential soul of its own, as does a cutting, as soon as it is separated from the parent plant and stuck in the ground. It is a meritorious act to increase vegetable souls but no punishable sin is committed by destroying them.

The souls of animals (with the exception of leeches and mosquitoes, which are believed to be emanations of devils and soul-less) are far more important; it is a major sin to destroy an animal for it is possible that its soul may be that of an ex-human being; and pious people will erect prayer-flags for animals killed through accident or in the normal course of human life. Partly by divination, and partly by the observation of footprints near the place where the body was disposed of, it is possible to tell if the soul of a recently dead relative has been reincarnated as an animal; if this does occur it is said that the near relations should abstain from eating this species of animal. I never came across nor heard of such an instance of ritual prohibition, for dead people are never discovered to have migrated into any animal which was fit to eat.

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774 The reincarnated soul of a human being arises at the moment of
● 779 conception and is all through life as it were the mirror image of the body it inhabits. Thus a baby's soul is as weak and feeble as
[751] its body; and it is for this reason that Lepchas always attach a snail-shell round their baby's necks or wrists; it may be that the soul will be pursued by demons and will not have time enough to get back to the midriff under the heart—the normal home of the soul in waking life; the pursued soul can then creep into the snail-shell where it can hide in safety. The souls of very old people are equally feeble; but no hiding place is necessary for them as they are too tough for devils to eat. Anything which happens to the body also happens to the soul, which is aware of it a split second earlier; if the body is cut or maimed or feels any sensation, the same thing occurs to the soul; if this were not so how could we feel anything? In normal waking life a man's body and soul are only separated in the case of violent accident; if for example a man should fall from a tree the soul would make a tremendous effort to separate itself from the body, get down safely and then return to its body afterwards. If the soul falls with the body the soul will be killed and the body die; but if the soul escapes the man will fall unconscious and be later revived when the soul re-enters its house.[6]
[828] Only in sleep or through mystic practices can the soul be separated from the body during life. Madness is believed to be the possession of a demon which imprisons the soul inside the body.

793 Finally lamaism is a social organisation. The lamas (to a lesser extent the nuns) are arranged in a disciplined hierarchy. They are a section of society which performs for the whole society its religious functions; in return the rest of society should give material support to the lamas. In Tibet this social aspect is extremely important; the lamas possess the greater part of the temporal power and are also as a group an exploiting class; the monasteries own land and the peasants attached to the land are practically monastery serfs. The lower-ranking lamas also work for the benefit of those of higher rank and are possibly as much exploited as the peasants; but they have, at least in theory, the possibility of rising to the higher ranks, which possibilities are completely shut out from the laymen. In Sikkim, as far as I can learn, the social influence of the lamas is considerably less; in Lingthem the monastery as a 'legal person' owns no land; the villagers help to pay for its building and upkeep,

[6] The Lepchas only recognise fainting or unconsciousness through pain; they do not consider fainting through fear or disgust or grief possible.

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and ends up dressed in white with a bow and arrow. This is believed to fool the devil, as is the device of taking a new name for a year.

Some of the sacrificial objects are elaborate and expensive and demand several hours and a great deal of material to make. All the rituals are described in various sacred books, and when making the sacrificial objects these books are always consulted.

I think the nearest parallel to the attitude of the Lepchas towards lamaist and Mun ceremonies can be found in that of an ignorant and somewhat hypochondriac European towards germs (the devils) and vitamins (the gods). There are a number of precautionary antiseptic measures to be taken against germs: salad is washed in disinfectant, food wrapped up in cellophane, children not kissed for fear of infection, the nose held when there is a bad smell from a drain, inoculations made against the fear of various diseases at regular intervals. Psychologically these precautions correspond almost exactly to the general and regular apotropaic services, either those held for the whole community or the obligatory consultations which have to take place at the beginning of each twelve-year cycle after the third. Once a germ has got a hold the disease has to be diagnosed and various remedies applied, for some of which you call in a doctor while others are traditional. These remedies correspond to the special services held in the case of illness or misfortune, the lama being rather regarded in the light of the consultant specialist and the Mun as the purveyor of old-world and traditional remedies. To keep in good health one has to follow certain rules about ventilation and sunlight and a correctly balanced diet. For the Lepchas these precepts are replaced by the worship of the gods. It is important to worship the gods and to have plenty of vitamins but to drive away devils and to get rid of germs is emotionally far more urgent and important. Though the other-worldly aims of lamaism are on the lips of some lamas they do not seem to me to be of great emotional importance; people say 'there are fewer devils here now that we have the lamas and their books' rather as they might say 'there is less diphtheria here now that we have got the new drainage system'. Though the lamas are considered to have driven away a number of the older devils an almost equally great number of new devils have been brought in following the arrival of Sikkimese and Nepali, as new diseases have arisen from new occupations and conditions of life to replace those which have been destroyed by a stricter application of hygiene.

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The Mun religion has a very copious validating mythology and theology. The origin of everything in the world, visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, and the changes they have undergone to bring them to their present state are told in a great number of stories of varying emotional importance. Some of the simplest of the 'origin' stories are known and told by everyone; the more important ones require *loong* before they can be told; and the most important of all, the story of creation, is only known in its full details by the Mun; one of the chief parts of their training is the learning of this story, which it is said takes seven whole days in its telling, by heart. By far the greater part of it consists of lists of pairs of supernaturals who produce the phenomena which greet our eyes today.

'Under this world is an ocean; under that ocean is another earth of twelve super-imposed stories, and under that there lives Itpomu, the Creative Mother, and her husband Débu. Their first children were Tak-seu and Tak-from, who are also called Narzong-*nyou* and Komsi*thing*. After them were born Mlum Mukyam, Sakyeun-faat-it, Saba-faat-chaum, Suk-dum-lung-ming and Chi-lel, all of whom are the present earth; Palyou and Pakyam who are gladness and joy; then Ta-lyang, Ta-kook and Ta-kok who are the blue sky without ornament: then Bru-nong, and Jil-vong, Long-mu and Tso-kor who are the forest in the sky where the stars live: then Tak-bru-num and Jit-it who are the stars. The ocean between the two worlds is called lyang-tak-yoor *oong*, tagum-lyang-shin-mu *oong* and is the home of Tal-i-nau and her husband San-go. Under the second earth are two huge copper vessels beside Itpomu, full of water, and under them is a fire; this is the reason why the earth becomes warm and wet. Then was born Panjer-roong and Pantsong-roong which is the Rungit river; then Kum-zer roong which is the origin of hot streams which cure all ills . . . then were born Num-ri and Num-ra who begat the thunder-bird, *sadher*. . . .' The greater part of the story continues in this vein.

Later on in the same story the origin of devils and the creation of the Mun spirit is recounted. This is also a very long story but is far better known than the Genesis. I only propose to give an outline of it.

'The first children of Itpomu and Débu were Komsi*thing* and Narzong-*nyou*; although they were brother and sister they

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lights; grain and flowers are also offered to the gods from time to time.

On either side of the altar are pigeon-holes, in which the 222 volumes of the Teng-gyur (the great Commentary on the Lamaist Scriptures) are stored, the actual scripture itself, the Kang-gyur as it is called (108 volumes), being stored in the upstairs room which we used as a bedroom. There are no chairs in the monastery, the Lamas* (here called Yukman) sitting cross-legged on planks on the floor, which are arranged in two lines running at right angles to the altar. The head Lama, or Dorje Lopön, has a rough sort of seat on which he, too, sits cross-legged. This, however, is raised a little above the level of the floor.

The main hall takes up most of the ground floor, but at one end there is a room, only about nine feet wide, which in addition to a small altar, complete with image, houses three enormous prayer-drums, which ring a bell each time they are turned completely round. These drums, or perhaps barrels would be a better word, are about ten feet high, and each is completely filled with strips of paper on which the magic formula *Om mane padme hum* has been written over and over again. One turn of the drum is equivalent to uttering this mystic sentence the same number of times that it has been written on the paper within. When one has nothing better to do, therefore, a quiet half-hour of turning a giant prayer-wheel is as good a means of acquiring merit as any other. People would often drop in at odd moments to do this.

The largest of the three drums had a rather elaborate top that projected through the ceiling into a small room above, which we used as a bathroom. This top was decorated with a muslin flounce of red, blue, and yellow and looked something like a rather dirty ballet skirt. When the drum was turned

*The term Lama should rightly only be applied to a monk who has reached a certain definite standing in the Buddhist church by reason of his learning and piety. It is extremely doubtful if anyone in Lingtem has any claim to this title; but since the term is commonly, though quite incorrectly, used by most Western writers to denote any Lamaist monk, and since the Lepchas themselves use it in this way, I have decided to follow the general practice.

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796 sing-song voice. Two small boys sat beside them, and banged
[201] drums and cymbals at intervals to mark the completion of the various parts of the service. There was another small table in front of the Dorje-Lopön and on this was placed his bell and dorje (thunderbolt). Another Lama now came and sat in front of this table. By his side was a large bowl of *chi* in which grain of various kinds floated. From time to time he dipped into this with a ladle and threw a little of the liquid away with a loud cry of *loch*. This is the common Lamaist rite of *Serkyem:* it is not peculiar to Sikkim. After perhaps twenty minutes the Lamas decided that their ministrations were sufficient, whereupon the remains of the
[781] bowl were cast unceremoniously away. All this time the spectators were paying little attention; those who were still sufficiently sober being engaged in the distribution of meat.

The stretcher containing the *Gedo* was now lifted up and placed on the altar and the large *Deu* fastened behind the central figure. Another offering, known as *Chendong*, was now brought and put down on the ground, in front of the *Gedo*. It consisted of two large copper pots (the property of the monastery), eight pieces of rather worn cloth (provided by various female Muns), and one Tibetan ceremonial scarf, the last two being arranged on top of a winnowing-tray. Later on these were carried a few yards down the road, as a symbol that the gods had accepted them, and then returned to their owners.

[768 Holy water was again sprinkled on the *Gedo*, and for a
● 779] moment there was a slight hiatus while one of the Lamas referred to a book to see how the ceremony should proceed. The lamps on the *Gedo* were now lighted, after which the Dorje-Lopön stood up and called upon the gods and demons to accept the offering. He also asked them to send no hail.
[788] There was another short period of chanting, after which many people gathered round the offering, picked up one of the cigar-like "wavers," touched his forehead with it and waved
[781] it over others, afterwards replacing it on the altar. As they did this the people called upon the spirits not to harm them;

1 [ie. The second Dorje-Lopön and Tapoor.--Analyst]

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was ever necessary for purposes of defence; but in a country as dry and cold as Tibet, where internal heating is still unknown, they serve the purpose of keeping the occupants of houses warm. This feature, although quite unnecessary in the warmer climate of Sikkim, has been retained in most of the public buildings, but in private houses has given way to walls of bamboo lath and mud plaster, which give all the protection required.

The ordinary Lepcha cottage is generally raised about six feet above ground, and is supported by wooden pillars resting on stones. It is entered by means of a ladder, which usually takes the form of a roughly notched bamboo, the space beneath the house being occupied by the cattle.

The building of houses, like every other Lepcha activity, is hedged around with rules and restrictions. Not all of these are always regarded; but to pretend a complete indifference would be to lay oneself open to the machinations of the ubiquitous evil spirits.

When a man wishes to build a new house he first takes a little earth from the proposed site and gives it to a Lama, who will then divine whether the place is suitable or not. This he does, not by means of meditation, or any other form of concentration, but by referring to a book called *Sachet Zai Patar*. There was only one copy in Lingtem and its owner, when reading it out to us, was honest enough to own that although he had studied the book for years he still found some of the instructions quite incomprehensible. Here is the gist of them:

Jampay Yung, Kongshi Gyabo, Hishay Tugyel, and Shinji Tulgay Gyabo once gathered together in Gyakar, which, so the Hlaribu said, is probably Budh Gaya but may be Benares! But in any case, in Gyakar there are seven burning ghats. These four gods consulted together and they came to the conclusion that since men were building houses all over the place, and without any regard to the suitability of the sites, it was incumbent upon them to formulate some instructions.

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While the feasting was going on outside the monastery the actual service was carried on in the main room of the building. To us it appeared to be little more than indiscriminate banging of drums and cymbals; but actually the whole order of service is described in detail in a Tibetan book, the instructions in which are carefully followed. From time to time some of the Lamas came out and joined in the general fun and games, but none of the revellers appeared to enter the monastery except to keep the monks' bowls filled with *chi*.

By midday most of the people were more or less tight. I saw a boy of about sixteen attempting to feel the breasts of Tafoor's wife, much to the amusement of the onlookers and the woman herself. She freed herself from his attempted embraces, uncovered one of her breasts and squeezed some milk out of it into her hand. She then ran after the boy and tried to rub the milk on his face. At this there was general laughter; and although a number of old people were present they took no notice; nor was conversation restrained in their presence. Later on in the evening this same boy made some personal remarks about Tafoor's wife again, whereupon she again bared her breast and tried to squeeze some milk into his hat; but he was too quick for her and darted away. There was a great deal of this sort of play, and Dhawa and Sukra Sing said that the conversation was almost exclusively devoted to sex. As Christians they naturally disapproved of this conduct; but even Palden, who is no Puritan and who has lived in a Lepcha village for years, says that this sort of thing never happens in villages in other parts of Sikkim, where women are not even allowed to enter the monastery compound. He was quite genuinely shocked; not so much at the sexual freedom, but at the lack of reverence shown at what is, after all, a religious festival.

A great deal of mess has been made in the monastery garden and it appears to be nobody's duty to clear it up. The place looks like Hampstead Heath after August Bank Holiday, and there is a smell of stale beer about the place.

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The *Boom Kor* ceremony. The procession about to leave Lingtem monastery.

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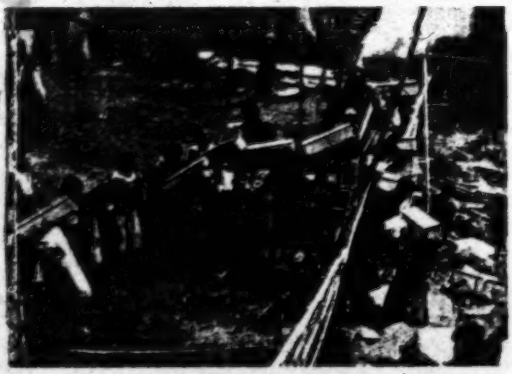

The sacred books starting off on their journey round the district. Each volume is carried by a woman.

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Small image of Guru Rimpoche, over which a bell-shaped "umbrella" is held, and pot of holy water being carried in the procession.

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The return of the *Boom Kor* procession. Women with offerings and Lamas pronouncing blessings as the procession returns to the monastery.

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Villagers pressing their foreheads against the books as they are carried into the monastery.

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Carrying the books upstairs. Note that all the women have let down their plaits as a sign of respect.

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